

## Emergency Preparedness – Overcoming Complacency

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Dr. Julie Gerberding, Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, says the biggest challenge public health faces is complacency. Despite 9-11, the 2001 anthrax attacks, SARS, recent food contaminations and the looming threat of pandemic influenza, many people are still not prepared to respond to a public health emergency.

A national survey conducted by the Council for Excellence in Government in 2006 evaluated the preparedness level of 1,000 Americans. Those who responded were rated on a 10-point scale (0=done nothing to prepare/10=done everything to prepare). The average level of preparedness from the test group was 3.31.

The report showed that senior adults are significantly less prepared than younger Americans, those with less than a high school diploma or with a household income of under \$40,000 are less prepared, and Hispanics are less prepared than whites or African Americans.

In order to overcome complacency and change this national preparedness average, we have to take initiative. Whether planning for natural disasters, large-scale emergencies like pandemic influenza or simply battling to protect health daily – the way to overcome complacency is to take the first step.

In overcoming alcohol addiction the first step is to admit you have a problem. The same is true for emergency planning – we have to admit we have a problem. We *are* at risk for public health emergencies – for SARS outbreaks, for food borne illness, for chronic disease, for pandemic influenza. Once we admit that, we can begin to take steps to protect ourselves.

Take the first step today – admit you are at risk. Learn all you can about the specific risks your family and your community face. Then visit [www.dhss.mo.gov](http://www.dhss.mo.gov) to find out how you can prepare to face these risks with three simple steps – how you can be **Ready in 3**.

For more information on emergency preparedness or *Ready in 3*, contact the Springfield-Greene County Health Department at (417) 864-1658.